OF THE

# Accepted Time,

AND

## Day of Salvation;

Delivered in a

# SERMON.

Printed for *J. Blare*, at the *Looking-Glass* on *London-Bridge*.

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# Accepted Time,

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# SERMON.

Wherein is declared the Goodneſs of God towards Mankind, in putting an Opportunity of Grace into our Hands, to ſeek Peace and Reconciliation with God; and alſo the great Danger of delaying our Repentance and ſquandering and trifling away this Golden Opportunity.

TOGETHER

With Encouragement to Sinners, In that they ſhall be ſure to find Mercy if they ſeek it in time.

Iſaiah 55. 6. *Seek ye the Lord whilſt he may be found: call upon him whilſt he is near.*

By *Robert Ruſſel*, of *Wadhurſt* in *Suſſex*

Licenſed according to Order.

Printed for *J. Blare*, at the *Looking-Glaſs* on *London-Bridge*.

# OF THE Accepted Time, AND Day of Salvation, &c.

2 *Cor.* 6. part of verse 2.

——*Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.*

THE Occasion of these Word may be taken from the Words immediately before the Text, which were the Lord's own Words, spoken by the Mouth of the Prophet *Isaiah*, 49. 8. saying, *I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a day of Salvation have I helped thee*; or, as it is in the words before the Text, *in a day of Salvation have I succoured thee*: and from thence the Apostle takes occasion to

shew them when that *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation is*, wherein God hears us and accepts us; and that he doth here, in the words of my Text, *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of Salvation.*

From these Words I shall gather this General Observation.

That the only time to make our peace with God, and thereby to obtain Mercy and Salvation, is now, this present season of Grace; or, the time present is the only acceptable time; For, *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of Salvation.*

The Text affords us these Two General Parts,

First, here is a double Note of Attention; *Behold! behold!*

Secondly, Here is the subject matter to *Behold*; that is, *now is the accepted time*, and *now is the day of Salvation.*

First, Here is a double Note of Attention; *Behold! behold!* now to behold a thing is to take great notice of it, to observe it, and to mind it; and we may be sure, that whensoever we are called upon to behold a thing, it must be something of very great concern; there are many

many things that are not worth beholding; for if you mind it, you may find in the Scriptures, that when any thing is mentioned that is of greater concernment than others, it is always brought in with this Note *Behold*, as *James* 3. 12. *Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow*; a matter of very great concernment. So *John* 1. 20. *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the World*: and many others: Now there cannot be a matter of greater concernment than this in my text, that *now is the accepted time*, and *now is the day of Salvation*. A thing which concerns our winning or losing of Heaven for ever; a thing which concerns our everlasting peace, or our everlasting woe; that now is the time, that if we in earnest seek for mercy, we may have it: *Now is the time*, that if we seek and desire grace, Pardon, and Salvation, we shall be accepted, but afterwards all our praying, crying and intreating will be in vain: Now what can be more worth our beholding than this? this is a matter which concerns our selves, and it is of the greatest concernment in the World, therefore this requires a double Note of attention, to put us in mind of it, *Behold, behold*.

And so I pass Secondly, from the Note *Behold*, to the second General Head, the subject matter to be beheld, and that also

is double; *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of Salvation.* Now tho' the *accepted time*, and the *day of Salvation* are two several Words, yet in sence they are one and the same: for the *accepted time*, is our *day of Salvation*, and our *day of Salvation* is the *accepted time*, wherein if we unfeignedly seek the Lord, and turn to him by true Repentance, we shall be sure to be accepted, pardoned and saved; For *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of Salvation.*

Now in my further prosecution of this Subject, I shall proceed after this manner:

First, I shall shew you, that with us there is such a time as an *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation.*

Secondly, I shall shew you the Season when this *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation* is.

Thirdly, the Reason of it. And,

Lastly, The Application.

I shall begin with the first, and shew you that with us there is such a time, and *day of Salvation*; And that, first in respect of the fallen Angels, who never had such a season allotted them: Alas! they Committed but one Sin against God, and that only but in Thought, and yet for that one Sin, they were thrust out of Hea-

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ven, and reserved under Chains of Darkness unto the dreadful Judgment of the great Day they being once fallen, had never a *day of Salvation* afforded them; they never had one moment of time allotted them, upon the improvement of which, they might have been reserved to mercy; therefore if they should pray and cry, and intreat the Lord, never so earnestly, that he would forgive them that one Sin, and restore them once more to mercy, yet they shall never be regarded: Christ suffered not for them, there was not one drop of Blood shed to wash away their Sin: *For he took not upon him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abarham, Heb. 2. 16.*

Secondly, There is with us such a time as an *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation*, in opposition to those damned Souls, that are already in Hell; 'tis true, the Devils being once fallen, never had mercy offered them, they never had one minute of time afforded them to work out their Salvation; whereas these damned wretches once had mercy offered them, but they despised it; they once had a *day of Salvation*, a time wherein they might have been *accepted*: alas! they had many a Call from God, time after time, many a secret motion from his Spirit; they once heard many a Sermon, and enjoyed many a Sabbath, many an Ordi-

dinance; God waited upon them time after time, year after year, whilſt they continued in their Rebellion againſt him: but, alas! alas! they ſinned away all theſe precious opportunities, all this time they might have been accepted, if they had turned to God in earneſt; but loe, now the day of Grace is concluded, the Door of Hope is for ever ſhut againſt them, now they are left in a far more miſerable condition than the fallen Angels are in; for they once had a golden ſeaſon of Grace put into their hands, but they wilfully loſt it and trifled it away: long did God wait and call upon them, from one time to another, by his Spirit and by his Meſſengers, but they wearied out his Patience, grieved his Spirit, deſpiſed his Meſſengers, abuſed all his Goodneſs: alas, the Devils will never have ſuch conſiderations as theſe to torment them, as theſe Damned Souls now have.

Thirdly, There is with us ſuch a time as an *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation*, in oppoſition to what ſhall be with us hereafter if we let it ſlip; when we come to Hell, we ſhall be in the ſame miſerable Condition that thoſe Damned Souls are in that are already there. Conſider, that Man being Created in a holy & Righteous Eſtate, and we being fallen, if God had not found out a way for our Recovery, we had

had been left in as miserable a condition as the fallen Angels were; but God of his unspeakable mercy, looked in tender love upon lost Mankind, that he gave his dearly beloved Son to suffer and dye for us, and for his sake he hath afforded every one of us a day of Grace, which if we duly improve in turning to God, in receiving of this his Son, as he is offered, we shall be accepted, pardoned, and saved; but if we squander away this this precious season, in following vanity and foolery, in satisfying our lusts, and pleasing our selves, until the door of Mercy be shut; our Damnation will be much more greater, than if we never had such an opportunity put into our Hands; that's the first; there is with us such a time as an *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation*.

Secondly, I shall next shew when this *accepted time* and *day of Salvation is*; that is, it is now, *Now is the accepted time*, and *now is the day of Salvation*. The Apostle doth not speak it in the future Tence, that soon after will be an *accepted time*, tho' you continue in your sins for a while in rebelling against God, grieving of his Spirit, and provoking him to Wrath, yet if you turn to God hereafter, you shall be accepted; no, but he speaks in the present Tence, *Behold, now is the accepted time*, now is the opportunity of Grace put into your hands, wherein Heaven

is to be won or loſt for ever; and according as you improve this preſent ſeaſon of Grace, ſo muſt your Everlaſting Eſtate be in another World; all Mankind are in a miſerable Eſtate by Nature, and it is now that the terms of mercy are offered you, and an opportunity of Grace put into your hands; O! for the Lords ſake do not ruin your Souls for ever, by neglecting ſo precious an opportunity: mark what our Saviour ſaith, *Matth.* 21. 26. *Agree now with thy Adverſary quickly, whilſt thou art in the way with him, leſt at any time the Adverſary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be caſt in priſon: Verily I ſay unto thee thou ſhalt not come out thence till thou haſt paid the utmoſt farthing.* Now God is your Adverſary, for we are all by nature Enemies to God by reaſon of ſin; but yet God of his tender love hath given us terms of Reconciliation; agree therefore with him quickly, before his Juſtice hath ſeized upon thee, and thou be delivered to the Officer, the Devil, and then thou ſhalt by him be caſt into the Priſon of Hell, and there thou muſt lye in extream and intollerable Torments, until thou haſt paid the utmoſt Farthing of God's Juſtice which can never be to all Eternity: O! therefore agree and make your Peace with your God quickly, whilſt thou art in the way with him,

him, for now you are in a fair way with him to be reconciled, for he offers you terms of mercy, he hath ſhewed you in his Word by what means you may come to make an Agreement with him; he calls upon you by his Meſſengers, he intreats you in Chriſt's ſtead, to be reconciled to him, 2 *Cor.* 20. And if God ſo earneſtly deſire our Reconciliation with him, what a fair way are we then with God to be reconciled? but continue in your unconverted eſtate, and in your enmity againſt God a little longer, until the ſeaſon of Grace be at an end, and God hath ſhut againſt you the door of Mercy, then God and you will be unreconcilable for ever, then all your prayers, & tears and endeavours ſhall never be accepted; then nothing remains, but to the Priſon of Hell you muſt be caſt, there to remain for ever and ever: therefore, as *Eliphaz* ſaid to *Job* ſo ſay I to you, *Job.* 22 21. *Acquaint now thy ſelf with him and be at peace, thereby good ſhall come unto thee*; for behold now is the time that thou mayeſt be accepted; but more particular to ſhew you when this *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation is*, it is now in this life, for there is no making our Peace with God after death; therefore ſaith *Solomon Eccl.* 9 10. *Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the Grave whither thou goeſt.*

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Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, whether it be to repent, to close savingly with Christ, to get Grace, or to strengthen thy Graces, or to secure thy Title toward Heaven: O set about it with all thy Might and Main, for there is none of this to be done in the Grave, whether we are all a hastening; then Praying opportunities, Sermon opportunities, Sacrament opportunities, Sabbath opportunities will be all at an end: Now, if yet you are in your unconverted Estate, and yet under the Wrath of God, now through God's Grace you may be converted; if yet you are Enemies to God, you may be reconciled; if yet you are in your Sins, you may be pardoned; if yet you are in the State of Damnation, you may be brought into an State of Salvation. But when once Death hath shut your Eyes, then your condition will be unalterable for ever, *I must work the work of him that sent me, whilst it is to day; for the night cometh, when no Man can work.*

But yet though the time of this Life be the *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation*, yet every time of a Man's Life may not be an accepted time with him; for with some Men, the day of Salvation lasteth all their life long, and with some it doth not: therefore, well may the Prophet cry out, *Isaiah* 55. 6. *Seek ye the*

*Lord*

*Lord whilst he may be found; call upon him whilst he is near*; for there may come a time, even in the time of this Life, that the Lord will not be found, tho' he be sought never so diligently, as *Esau*, because he neglected the season of his Repentance, he afterwards sought Repentance carefully with Tears, even long before the day of his Death, but he could not find it, *Heb.* 12. 17.

'Tis true, as long as there is Life, there is Hope, there is hope so long as a Man is on this side Hell, and the time of Life is commonly called the day of Grace, not because the day of Grace continues all a Man's life long; but because it is bounded within the compass of a Man's Life: Now, because every time of a Man's Life may not be an *accepted time*; I shall therefore shew you some certain seasons of a Man's Life, which if he have but Wisdom to know them, and Grace to improve them, he shall be sure to be accepted; I shall but little more than name them.

First, The time of Youth is the accepted time, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*, says *Solomon*, Eccl. 12. 1. O Friends! if you turn to God, and in time close with Christ, and seek for Pardon, and Mercy, now whilst you are young, you shall surely be accepted; for saith God to his People *Israel*, Jer. 2.

Jer. 2. 2. *I have expected the kindneſs of thy Youth*; ſome young People I have ſometimes looked upon, as the happieſt People in the World, becauſe we may be ſure their Seaſon of Grace is not gone; the preſent time is the day of Salvation, the Lord give them Grace to improve it: to ſee young Boys and Girls give themſelves to ſtudying the Scripture, to praying, and crying after Chriſt's Grace, and Mercy, Oh! it is the rareſt ſight in the World: whoever the door of Mercy is ſhut againſt, it ſhall certainly be open to them.

Secondly, The time of Health and Strength is the *accepted time*: In the old Law, that which was offered up in Sacrifice, which was Torn, or Blind, or Lame, was not excepted; this ſhews, that thoſe who ſpend the beſt of their days, and Strength, in the work of the Devil, and then thinks to give up themſelves to God, when Sickneſs, Lameneſs, and feeble old age comes, muſt never look to be accepted; God will not be turned off with the Devil's leavings.

Thirdly, The time of the Goſpel is the *accepted time*, Praying opportunities, Sermon opportunities, Sacrament opportunities, Sabbath opportunities; theſe are Seaſons of Salvation, for we know not how ſoon God may remove our Candleſtick out of his place, and take from us the means of Grace; and then the opportunities

tunities of Grace will be also at an end.

Fourthly, and Lastly, the time of God's Spirits working, and striving in the Hearts of wicked Men, is the *accepted time*; and they that obey the Calls of God's Spirit when it strives, shall be sure to be *accepted*, let it be at what time soever, whether it be in Youth, or old Age: though the Spirit hath its goings and coming, yet some it doth not give over to their old Age, or to their dying day, and some it doth. God's Spirit is compared to *Noah's* Dove, which *Noah* sent out of the Ark, and it returned to him again: And then again, but when he sent the Dove out the Third time, the Dove never returned to him more; so the Spirit of God hath its goings and comings, it comes at one time into the heart of a Sinner, and secretly calls upon him to Repent and become a new Creature; but this Sinner, it may be, stifles these good Motions, quenches the Spirit, and continues still in his sinful course of Life, then it may be the Spirit depart, and after a while comes again, and finding the Sinner the same still, he departs, and then comes again, and again; and at last the Spirit being often resisted, and grieved, he is provoked finally to depart, and never to trouble him more, and then Grace is departed, and he is immediately delivered up to a hard Heart,

and

and a reprobate Mind, that ſhall never Repent; and when once he is brought to that paſs, then all the Sermons, and all the Prayers in the World will never do him any good, O! therefore have a care of quenching, and grieving the Holy Spirit of God, when it ſecretly ſtirs, and works in your Hearts; but be careful to obey its Motions, leſt the Spirit being grieved, withdraw its ſelf finally, and never return more, and then your *accepted time*, and *day of Salvation* will be at an end. Now conſider all this, if you are yet in your Youth, and Strength, and enjoy the Ordinances of God, and the means of Grace, and the ſecret Operations of God's Spirit; then behold, and again, *behold that now is the accepted time*, and *now is the day of Salvation.* Now with us there is ſuch a time as an *accepted time*; and *day of Salvation*; and that for theſe Two Reaſons, I will but juſt name them.

Firſt, That thereby the Saints might have occaſion for ever to magnifie the free Grace of God, that he hath not left them to periſh in their miſerable Eſtate, but hath offered them terms of Mercy, and hath put an opportunity of Salvation into their hands, and hath given them Grace to improve it.

Secondly, That thereby the wicked may be left without excuſe; for there is never a damned

ned Soul in Hell that can plead this, that they never had a day of Grace? O it would be a great lessening of their Torments, if they could plead so; Alas! there was never a Man nor Woman since the Creation of the World, but hath had a season of Grace; there was never none yet ever lived, be their Lives short or long, but before they dye, they have Mercy offered them, and an acceptable time to seek it in; therefore the wicked shall be left without excuse: nay, 'twill add much to their Torments, to consider, that they once had a season of Grace and Salvation, and yet willfully lost it: O let every one therefore both small and great, behold, and consider, that *now is the accepted time*, and *now is the day of Salvation.*

## *The* APPLICATION.

THE first Use that I shall make of this, shall be a Use of Terror, to all such as squander and trifle away this precious Season of Grace and Salvation: Friends, you have heard that God's Spirit will not always strive with Man; God is not bound to wait all a Man's Life long; if God continue waiting from one time to another, from one Year to another, from one Sabbath to another, and yet

you turn a deaf Ear to his Calls, and slight all his Warnings, and will go on resolutely, and presumptuously in your Sins; consider, God will at least be weary of waiting, his patience will at last be tired out, and then, just as you served God in your day of Grace, so God will serve you, when his day of Wrath and Vengeance comes: O Read, and tremble, in that dreadfull place of Scripture, *Prov.* 1. 2. to the end: Mark there how lovingly God expostulates with wicked Men, saying, *How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and ye scorners delight in scorning? and ye fools hate knowledge?* and then see his loving Call and Invitation, verse 23. *Turn you at my Reproof*; and also his gracious Promise, *Behold, I will pour out my Spirit into you; I will make known my words unto you:* but yet all this loving Expostulation, Invitation, and Promise, would prevail nothing with them; they would run on in their evil courses for all that; therefore see what God saith to them now, verse 24. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at naught my Counsels, and would none of my Reproofs; I also will laugh at your Calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh; when fear cometh as a whirlwind, when destruction and anguish cometh upon them, shall they call upon me, but then I*

will

*will not answer, then they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, in that they hated Knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord*: A most dreadful Text this is, if it be rightly considered; in the day of their Visitation, God called upon them to turn from their evil ways, and they turned a deaf Ear, and would not regard; but afterwards, when their day of *Israel* was past, and the day of their Extremity was come, then they called upon God for Mercy, and God would not regard them; it is a common Proverb amongst us, *He that will not whilst he may, when he would he shall have nay*; this was the very Case of *Esau*, he was a Hunting, and following his fleshly Delights, when God was a calling him to Repentance; and then afterwards, when he would have repented, he was rejected, for he found no place for Repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears *Heb.* 12, 27. Now God may call long upon wicked men to turn and be saved, both by his Word, and by his Spirit, but they will not regard; but when this their day of Salvation is ended, and they come to lye upon their Death-Beds, O! how they will then cry out, *Lord pardon me, Lord save me, Mercy Lord, Mercy Lord, some Mercy for Christ's sake*; but God may justly answer them, *No Sinner, no Mercy to be had, I once offered thee Mercy,*

*but thou abuſeſt it*; and ſeeing thou would'ſt not accept of Mercy whilſt it was offered thee, therefore now the Door of Mercy is ſhut againſt thee for ever.

Secondly, My Second Uſe ſhall be for matter of encouragement, to ſuch who are willing to come in, and accept of the Terms of Mercy, but yet keep off, through many doubts and fears.

*O*, ſays one, *I am afraid my day of Salvation is paſt already; and if ſo, all my endeavours will be in vain, do what I can, I ſhall never be accepted.*

*Anſwer.* To anſwer this, I will give you this one Mark, whereby you may know whether your day of Salvation be paſt or no; you ſay you are afraid that your day of Salvation is paſt; if ſo, that is a good ſign that it is not paſt; for thoſe with whom their day of Grace is paſt, they grow ſenſeleſs of any ſuch matter. Again, Don't you find ſometimes Godly Motions ſtirring in you by the Spirit? Don't you find in you ſometimes a Sorrow for Sin after it is committed, and a deſire to leave Sin? Doth not your Heart ſometimes melt, when you hear the Word Preached? Have you not ſome Deſires to become a new Creature? If ſo, then your day of Salvation is not yet paſt; for thoſe with whom the day of Grace is paſt,

they

they are given over to a ſenſeleſs, hard, and obdurate Heart, that is neither moved with Mercies, nor terrified with Judgments; and being given over to themſelves, they run into all kind of Wickedneſs with greedineſs; and as it ſeems, this is not thy Caſe as yet; ſo now, up, and cloſe with the Terms of Mercy, whilſt thy day of Salvation is lengthned out.

*O*, but ſaith another, *It may be, I am none of God's Elect; and if ſo, then all my endeavours will be to no purpoſe.*

*Anſwer.* Whether a Man be elected or not, that is not in his power to know, and therefore he ought not to meddle with it; but you muſt underſtand that God decrees aright; for thoſe whom God hath elected, he hath poſitively decreed, abſolutely decreed, that they ſhall be juſtified, ſanctified, and ſaved; but thoſe whom God hath reprobated, he hath not abſolutely decreed, that they ſhall be damned, but hath left them to their own choice, as *Adam* and *Eve* were; and therefore their Damnation is wilful of themſelves, but whether you are elected or not, if I may ſo ſpeak, if you repent, and be converted, you ſhall be ſaved, if not, you ſhall be damned; as many as do periſh, do not periſh becauſe they were not elected, but becauſe they would not uſe the means in order to their Salvation.

O but

O but you will say, it may be; *God will not give me Grace to Repent, and without his Grace I can do nothing.*

*Answer.* Know for your Encouragement, that both you and every one else enjoys *a day of Salvation*, and this day of Salvation is a time of Assistance, as well as a time of Acceptance: mark the promise of Christ, *Mat.7.7. Ask and ye shall have; Seek and ye shall find; Knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

Mark, Christs speaks there nothing concerning Election, but every one, whoever he be, that asketh, seeketh and knocketh for Grace, Pardon, and Mercy, and that in a Season, whilst it may be had, shall certainly be heard and accepted; but then you must be sure to seek in Season, for seeking out of Season never yet found Success. Now if *Esau* had but sought Repentance in earnest, when God called him to Repent, then God would have strengthned and assisted him, and also accepted him; but he sought for Repentance when the season of Repentance was gone, and that ruined him for ever. Now mark this, whatever the Decrees of Heaven be concerning you, yet if you are but willing to leave your Sins, and do heartily

desire

desire grace and mercy, and earnestly seeks it by prayer and supplication, and that in the season of grace, whilst it is offered you; then tho' you can do nothing of your selves, yet you shall have strength and assistance enough, for God will help you, Christ will help you, and the Spirit will help you; you shall have help from Heaven, and through the Spirit of Christ's Strengthning, you shall be enabled to go thro' with this great Work, and then you shall not only be assisted, but also accepted and rewarded; but then you must be sure to seek out in Season, in your day of Salvation, for if you seek out of Season, all your seeking and striving will be in vain.

Lastly, To conclude all with a Word or two of Exhortation; be exhorted, as you desire the Salvation of your Souls, to consider and improve this precious Season of Grace and Salvation, in working out your Salvation before it be too late: O it is most dreadfull to consider, that God hath alotted us but one small portion of time to do all that ever must be done for Eternity, and yet it should be squandered away in Vanity and Foolery: but Friends, whatsoever you see others do do you in earnest lay hold on this your day of Salvation, before it is gone. *Seek ye the Lord now, whilst he may be found, and call upon him whilst he*

*he is near*: and whilst others spend their precious time in Feasting, Rioting, and in the pleasures of the Flesh, do you spend your time in Fasting, Praying, Repenting, and suing out the Pardon of your Sins, and making your Peace with God; and if you thus do, then at last, when time shall cease and be no longer, you shall hear that blessed Welcome proceed from the Mouth of Christ, *Well done thou good and faithfull Servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord*: Which the Lord of his infinite mercy grant to us all; *Amen.*

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## *ADVERTISEMENT.*

*These six Books, lately Written by* Robert Russel, *are sold by* J. Blare *Bookseller*, at the *Looking-Glass*, on *London-bridge*.

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